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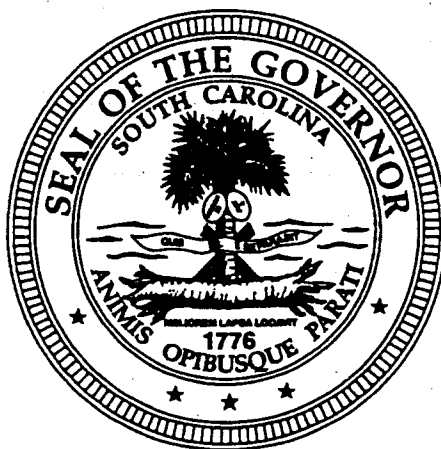
# STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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### GOVERNOR DAVID M. BEASLEY

### State of the State Address

### January 22, 1997

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## 1997 State of the State Address

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen of the 112th General Assembly, Constitutional Officers, members of my cabinet, my fellow South Carolinians.

As I see the familiar faces of this body, I am reminded that we have worked together on some of the greatest reforms this state has ever seen. May we continue on in that same spirit of cooperation.

We begin this session with sadness over our dear friend, Representative Jean Harris, who suffered a stroke earlier this week. Jean is one of the most cherished members of this General Assembly, and her sweet spirit will be sorely missed in our proceedings. I'd like us to take a moment to remember Jean and her family in this difficult time and pray for her speedy recovery.

It is a personal pleasure to welcome Representative Jim Harrison back from Bosnia. And I welcome all our new colleagues to the task. You may find that the calling of leadership is often thankless, but your contribution will be timeless.

The reason is sitting among us tonight. About 300 high school students are here for a front-row seat in the political process. Their presence is a reminder to us that it is for their good that we serve.

We have spent these last two years forging a foundation for their future. We've launched reforms that are beginning to bear fruit. And together, we are transforming South Carolina into one of the greatest success stories in the nation.

For two straight years, we've broken the five billion dollar barrier in capital investment. We've seen a 56 percent rise in job creation over two years, creating 50,000 new jobs with an average salary last year of \$30,000.

Comptroller General Earle Morris says we're in the best financial shape in our state's history. And the *Wall Street Journal* cited South Carolina as one of the best business climates on the map.

Government and business are working together hand in glove. Our Department of Commerce, led by Bob Royall, has become an aggressive champion for existing and rural businesses. And as usual, our workforce enjoys a reputation of quality that is the envy of the world.

We're dramatically improving our quality of life as we fundamentally change our approach to government.

Our economy is growing twice as fast as the rest of the nation's, and our per capita income is the eighth-fastest growing.

We were the first state ever to win back our AAA credit rating.

More than 11,000 families have left the welfare rolls in the past two years, hopefully never to return.

Violent crime dropped sharply in '95 after nearly a decade-long climb.

And to top it off, we gave South Carolinians the most sweeping tax relief in our state's history.

Let me be absolutely clear: Our promise to the homeowners through property tax relief was not made to be broken. We must protect that promise permanently, and we must never, ever retreat.

Lieutenant Governor Peeler, Speaker Wilkins, Senator Drummond...South Carolina has you, and the bodies that you lead, to thank for two incredible years.

As one team, we seized a common vision. We delivered on landmark reforms. And together, we are ready to lead South Carolina into the next phase of excellence.

But tonight is more than a night of celebration. This is a night of challenge.

We simply will not fulfill our destiny as an economic powerhouse unless we maintain the two roads leading to our future: hard infrastructure and human infrastructure.

Record-breaking development has been a blessing for our citizens, but it's piled heavy demands on our highways and bridges.

Especially along our beaches, the \$13 billion business of tourism brought in 31 million visitors last year. Along the I-85 Corridor in Greenville, Spartanburg and Anderson Counties, industries invested 750 percent more last year than they did just ten years ago.

These and other high-traffic areas demand a high-quality highway system now. Without it, our progress will stall.

We will start at the top by fighting a policy that's sending almost half our federal gas tax dollars to other states.

For every dollar we paid in federal gas taxes last year, 48 cents paid for projects elsewhere. In fact, our return on that investment was dead last among the 50 states, Washington, D.C. and the U.S. territories.

I urge you to join me in working with our Congressional delegation to put an end to this federal form of highway robbery. It's time to bring our tax dollars back home where they belong.

We must also recognize that raising taxes under the current system has never solved our problems, and it never will.

Voters in Horry and Beaufort Counties know it, and they met tax hike proposals with a resounding no. All of us remember the three-cent gas tax of just a decade ago. It promised to build the interstate connector to the beach and the Conway Bypass. We're still waiting.

If we raised the gas tax by another nickel, we would bring in about \$100 million a year. But divided up statewide, that windfall would give Charleston only about \$10 million. The Grace Bridge project alone is set to cost over \$400 million.

In the Grand Strand, it's the same story. They would get about \$10 million, then face the \$450 million sticker shock for all their projects.

Without changing how we operate, our people will only get more of the same: funds spread thin and bureaucracy unchecked.

The Department of Transportation simply hasn't been able to meet our most pressing needs and still handle all the other projects it is commissioned to do.

My appointed chairman Buck Limehouse agrees with me that extraordinary demands require creative solutions.

We must establish an apparatus through which we will fund the RIDE Committee recommendations in Horry County, replace the Grace Bridge in Charleston, build the Southern Connector in Greenville and the Bobby Jones Expressway in Aiken County, and widen Highway 170 in Beaufort County.

The General Assembly should not go home this year without a plan. We should do it. We can do it. And we can do it without a tax increase.

I appreciate the work of Senator Ravenel and Representative Brown in developing a bond proposal. And I look forward to working with them to craft a plan that accomplishes our objectives.

But we must do a better job at leveraging our highway dollars and taking advantage of the 1997 ISTEA legislation currently before Congress. And we can do that by creating a transportation infrastructure bank.

The bottom line is that Wall Street experts tell us that under the current system, we can't generate the needed bond capacity without risking our AAA credit rating. And we can't face our future without building these roads and bridges.

This bank will allow us to tap into the unused bond capacity of the DOT and come up with more innovative financing options.

We will handle the debt service by redirecting a penny of the state gas tax into the state infrastructure bank, along with the interest earnings on the Highway Fund, one cent from the "C" Fund program and a portion of our federal gas tax dollars.

Once this is done, we will free up existing DOT resources to finally give neglected projects the attention they deserve.

But let me say very clearly, we cannot build every road or bridge through the infrastructure bank. We must dedicate this effort only to major projects with statewide economic impact and not kill our efforts trying to fund every parochial project in every county.

To ensure accountability, I recommend that we create an independent board to oversee the infrastructure bank and the bond proposals. We have seen too many good ideas blocked. We cannot tolerate interference by those interested in perpetuating a failed system.

I look forward to working with the leaders on the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways and Means to finalize the details. Because this infrastructure bank is not only the responsible thing to do. It's the only thing to do.

The time has come to move forward with a united front and our most creative solutions to strengthen the roads carrying us into the future.

But the single most valued road to the future is the one our children travel: the road of education.

We have acknowledged that parents are the first and most important educators by returning to them more money through property tax cuts and doubling the tax exemption for young children.

We have heard from the parents and educators about what they need in the schools, and we have responded.

--We are equipping every school with computer and interactive technology to launch our children into Information Age jobs.

--We are funding full-day kindergarten to prepare our youngest students for a life of learning.

--We are doubling the size of the Governor's School for Science and Math, and making year-round the Governor's School for the Arts in Greenville.

--We have collected so far over \$95 million for the Education Endowment Fund to build new schools, repair old schools and, for the first time in history, provide college scholarships.

I commend you, the General Assembly, for your actions. We are seeing results.

Lake City has built a new primary school. D.W. Daniel High in Pickens is building a new cafeteria. Walhalla High added eight new classrooms. And more than 13,000 students received help to pay for college.

In rural Dorchester County, where half of Knightsville Elementary's kindergarten students are considered at-risk, state and national awards indicate the school is one of the most innovative in the country.

More South Carolina students are taking advanced placement courses than almost any other state. And over 200 students were named National Merit Scholarship semi-finalists this year.

Ladies and gentlemen, this progress is real.

Are we where we want to be? No. Is there more work to do? Yes. But whatever else we may differ on, let us agree tonight to push and pull and tug and sacrifice until the dream of prosperity is attainable for every child in South Carolina.

My executive budget devotes nearly 45 percent of new money to continuing these initiatives. But we find ourselves in competition for superior teachers. Just as in business, there is an increased demand for excellence.

I call upon you to again make history this year. Let us for the first time break new barriers by raising teacher pay above the southeastern average, and let us never, ever, go backwards again.

If we're going to propel South Carolina into a new millennium, we must prepare our children to fill the shoes of scientists, physicists and engineers who can carry us there.

We can move in that direction by increasing the number of credits required for graduation from 20 to 24...credits that must be in the basic studies only: math, science, computers, foreign language.

So many reforms across the country have been based on a "dumbing down" philosophy, but we in South Carolina won't lower the hurdle to success. We will raise the bar.

To push the envelope toward excellence, parents and taxpayers must also have objective, fair and credible means to judge performance. It's called accountability.

I've promised Senators Setzler and Courson, as well as Representatives Townsend and Harrell, that I will work with them to pursue an accountability plan. None of us has all the answers, but we must find common ground.

If public education is to thrive, if our students are to be prepared, then we must constantly look for ways to bring parents, business people and educators together.

Accordingly, I have created what I call the PASS Commission, which stands for Performance, Accountability and Standards for Schools. My appointees are with us tonight, and they are some of the top minds in the world of business and education. Most of them are also parents. I ask them to stand and be recognized.

Our PASS Commissioners will spend the next six months identifying back-to-basics, globally-competitive academic standards. And I am asking the PASS Commission to tell us nothing less than what every student should know along the road to graduation and how they can reach those standards.

Let me assure our schools that pushing you toward common standards is not the same as forcing you to be standardized. Every school is different and will progress at a different pace. But for the sake of our children, we must demand progress nonetheless.

And we bring to this effort only one very special interest: our children.

If public education is the launching pad for improving the quality of life, then higher education is the fuel. Our colleges and universities have pressing construction needs and the most serious should be addressed in this year's bond bill.

But there's another need out there: college tuition. You've made a commitment to our first college scholarship program. Now I ask you to build on it.

Last year, I ordered a study of college tuition prepayment programs to see how other states are helping families save for college. By taking the best from those programs, we've constructed a plan that will work for South Carolina.

Simply put, parents with a ten-year-old child could lock in the cost of attending a state school at today's tuition rates. They would have eight years to pay the tuition into a state-administered account. And they would know exactly how much their child's education costs, without worrying about inflation or tuition increases.

This program is attainable. And it gets us closer to a goal we all share: putting a college education in the reach of every young man and woman in South Carolina.

After all, higher education is one of our most important workforce development initiatives. And another is welfare reform.

We've already used job-specific training in programs such as Special Schools to build one of the nation's strongest labor pools. New training requirements and incentives for hiring welfare recipients are bringing even more quality employees into our workforce. In fact, welfare rolls have shrunk by more than 20 percent in 18 months.

Now we are prepared to launch into the next phase of welfare reform, under the name "South Carolina WORKS."

Next week, I will be meeting with leaders from Chambers of Commerce across our state. And I will ask them to sign partnership agreements with us to help us match their members who need employees with welfare recipients ready to work.

Because every time a business hires someone away from welfare, we are one family closer to fulfilling our vision.

When we passed Family Independence, our vision was to help families make the transition from welfare to work safely. And one of the greatest barriers has been the availability of good child care.

I have asked in my executive budget for over \$4 million to fund additional child care slots. We want to help parents move into jobs knowing their children are in good hands.

If we are to succeed...and we must succeed...all of us must become part of the solution.

Before we had welfare, churches and civic groups sheltered the homeless and fed the hungry. Powered by human kindness and God's love, they did it effectively.

We must restore that sense of civic responsibility to the fabric of our culture. We must change welfare by changing hearts.

Our Putting Families First Foundation was created with that purpose in mind: to unite people of faith with families of need...meeting them with love and compassion, instead of judgment and condemnation.

It's been exciting to see the response. Let me give you one example.

In Greenville, Valley Brook Baptist Church opened its doors to a young homeless woman. They helped her find an apartment and a job, counseled her on her finances. They even held her hand as she gave birth. Now this woman who had little more than hope has everything to look forward to.

In just the last three months, more than 60 faith groups and civic organizations have agreed to pursue the same kind of nurturing relationships with welfare families.

These groups are with us tonight, including the good people of Valley Brook Baptist and the Foundation's partners at DSS. I'd like them to stand and let us thank them.

Even though the state will never...and should never...replace family and community as the true caretakers of those in need, it will always be the state's duty to protect the sanctity of life.

Last year President Clinton vetoed the will of Congress and the American people by refusing to ban the ghastly procedure of partial birth abortion.

I ask you to outlaw partial birth abortion in South Carolina and label it what it is: infanticide.

But what about those children among us born to circumstances beyond their control? Many of them are entrusted to our protective care. And too often they languish in our system, never experiencing the blessing of belonging.

Foster care is invaluable, and foster parents are a godsend. But our goal should be to restore children to permanent, loving homes.

Speaker Wilkins, Senator Hayes and I are working to build on positive steps taken last year by further reducing the obstacles to adoption. It will take teamwork to give every child the best start in life, much like the public-private partnerships that made us a national leader in childhood immunizations and reduced infant mortality to its lowest point ever.

It will also take teamwork to ensure that a child's formative years are spent learning how to become a productive, responsible member of society because they will be challenged by a world that wants to teach them the opposite.

After a decade of progress in the war on drugs, illicit drug use among our young people has doubled since 1993. Marijuana use has doubled. The number of drug treatment clients has more than tripled.

Equally disturbing is the fact that nearly half of American parents believe they are powerless in their children's decisions about drugs and alcohol.

Families are running against titanic forces in our culture, but they are still the ultimate shapers of all that a child will become. In fact, studies show that the more parents talk about the dangers of drugs, the less likely children are to be influenced by drug pushers.



Tonight the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services joins me in announcing a statewide campaign to reinforce parents in their pivotal role of raising drug-free children.

Parents must be on the front line of disapproval. But if we expect families to establish and enforce rules in the home, we must enforce the rules we've established in society.

When nearly 60 percent of 8th graders say that beer is easy to get, we have a credibility problem. We can restore our credibility by tilting the scales of justice back toward law enforcement.

A glitch in the law has made it nearly impossible for teenagers to take part in sting operations, even with a parent's permission. We've made it even tougher for law enforcement to crack down on vendors selling to minors. And children are the ones who lose. Let's fix the law, and then let them enforce it.

At the same time, we can make it easier for store owners to help us enforce the law. I'm asking the Division of Motor Vehicles to issue color-coded drivers' licenses to more clearly identify those under the legal drinking age. It's time to spell out in living color that we are serious about sealing up the cracks in this system.

As we protect young people from danger and give them rules to live by, we must also protect the abundant natural resources that our children stand to inherit.

Last year, we bought the wetlands of Sandy Island to preserve one of our most diverse wildlife habitats. We've spent millions to renourish our state's beaches. We're creating a Palmetto Trail of hiking and nature walks from the mountains to the coast.

Tonight I ask you to build on that commitment by helping us buy 35,000 acres of pristine land in the Jocassee Gorges, right down the road from the industrial core of the Upstate, so we can protect that land forever.

South Carolina's natural beauty has made it one of the most popular places in the world to visit, retire, and raise a family. To keep growing and improving our quality of life, we are committed to policies that strike a healthy balance between economy and environment.

We must be wise stewards of the resources God has given not just this generation, but all generations, to enjoy.

Our young people deserve a state filled with beauty. They deserve standards that lead to more productive lives. They deserve an education that leads to success. And as often as we seem to hear about the bad, young people deserve praise for their leadership toward the good.

Let me give you just one example. Last fall, two homeless women and their children went to Southside Christian School in Greenville crying, hungry, and looking for help.

Students in Mrs. Koury's 8th grade class started asking what they could do. And by the next week, her classroom was filled with food, clothing, toys and books.

The entire church community helped put a down-payment on a trailer. The students painted it, put in carpet, filled it with furniture and stocked the refrigerator. They cleaned the grounds of the trailer park, made friends there, and brought many of the families Thanksgiving dinner. They kept the women's children while they worked. And one student even saved \$70 from baby-sitting jobs and gave every cent to pay the electric bill.

These young people were the inspiration for a new state honor, patterned after the Order of the Palmetto, to recognize extraordinary youth.

Earlier today I presented to Mrs. Koury and her students at Southside Christian School the state's first ever Order of the Silver Crescent. And I ask them to stand so we can show them our appreciation.

These young people represent the best of South Carolina, the South Carolina we've always been, and the South Carolina we should always strive to be. They embody the spirit of the Palmetto State.

Joseph Conrad wrote in *Lord Jim* that "Each blade of grass has its spot on earth whence it draws its life, its strength; and so it is with man rooted to the land from which he draws his faith together with life."

And so it is with South Carolinians.

As a legislator, I had to concern myself with about 25,000 roots. As governor, the number is about three and a half million.

It's different from this perspective, not better, but different. John C. Calhoun's words ring with truth. "The very essence of a free government," he said, "consists in considering offices as public trusts, bestowed for the good of the country, and not for the benefit of an individual or a party."

Not one of us in this room is indispensable to a free society. But certain values are indispensable, and the Bible lays them out: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self control.

A society that embraces these virtues will prosper just as one that rejects them will fail.

This is why I came to the conclusion that the Heritage Act is a reasonable and honorable venture to protect our roots to the land while justly serving the good of all people.

Others came to that conclusion before I did. Three years ago the Senate passed the same bill to do the same thing: fly the flags in the front and back of the State House and protect monuments and streets named after Confederate heroes. Time ran out before the House could vote.

But during that period one of the most outspoken flag supporters in the Senate said, and I quote, "It was no easy task for us to sit down and look at a proposal

that would result in that flag being transferred to another location. At some point there had to be a realization that we have to give what we're asking for, and that's toleration and cooperation."

He went on to say, "I don't consider it a surrender. I don't consider it a sellout. I consider it to be a mutual agreement that we can celebrate a common ground, side by side."

I couldn't have said it better myself.

Now just as then, the Heritage Act would for the first time define the flag and its historical significance, reclaiming our roots from extremists who misuse it. Now just as then, it would fly the banners over the monuments to the Confederacy on both Gervais and Pendleton Streets. Now just as then, it would require an act of the General Assembly to tear down a Confederate monument or change street names, thus protecting them.

I am convinced that the Heritage Act is right for South Carolina today just as many of you indicated it was right back then. After witnessing the inflamed rhetoric, the venom, the demagoguery, it is clear that we as a people must find common ground, and quickly, lest we lapse ever deeper into the quagmire of suspicion and division.

I would ask three things of you on this issue.

First, deal with it straight up this year. Any effort to postpone or prolong the debate will just divide our people more and play into the hands of extremists on both sides.

Second, and I think most of us can agree on this, let's understand that the flag issue, however it comes out, does not educate one child, build one road or create one job. We have work to do, ladies and gentlemen. Let's not be so consumed with the past that we forfeit our legacy for the future.

And last, I would like each of you, both here and at home, to ask yourselves a few questions: Am I comfortable with the tone this debate has taken? Is the issue in proportion to the passions generated? Should it dominate headlines for years to come? Is this the best that we have to offer?

Some will say yes. But the vast majority will say no. No, I'm not comfortable with the tone of the debate. No, the issue is not in proportion to the passions expressed. No, it should not dominate political discussion past this session. No, this is not the best South Carolina has to offer.

Just look at how far we've come in concert: record jobs and investment; a sound fiscal position; tax relief; welfare reform; a renewed commitment to education. We did these things, not by debating whether we can be better, but by joining together and being better.

You, the General Assembly, made these things happen. Not by individual or party or race, but by collective vision made real by collective sweat.

Our course is conservative. It is steadfast.

But there comes a time when a society is at the crossroads and must make tough decisions about its future. Should we unite or divide? Do we practice in-your-face politics or turn the other cheek? Do we love our neighbor as ourselves or circle the wagons, us against them?

We can, and do, honor the past. We must, and should, protect our heritage from those who would rewrite history. The Heritage Act does all of these things, honorably, sensibly, with integrity.

But ladies and gentlemen, a new millennium is just over the horizon. This House of Representatives will be the last to end its service in the 20th century. I will be the last governor to end a term of office in this century.

While we want to protect history, everything we do and say will make history. While we desire to honor the past, we bear a responsibility to the future.

I am convinced that most of us in this room and those watching on television desire the same kind of future. In our mind's eye, we peer beyond the new millennium and dream of what Augustine called the shining city on a hill.

It's a place that offers a worthy job for every man and woman. A worthy school for every child. It's a place where the communities are safe from crime, where neighbor helps neighbor, where the least among us are uplifted, not dragged down. Where the greatest among us desire not to be served, but to serve.

And it's a place where the false boundaries of race and prejudice are crushed under the weight of mutual respect and common purpose.

Beyond that new millennium stands a dream where God is granted His rightful place in the public square and our people mount up with wings like eagles, run and not get tired, walk and not grow weary.

Is it a pipe dream? I don't think so. For every person who shouts to get his way, there are a hundred in this state who whisper prayers for others.

For every act of spite, there are a thousand acts of kindness that never get reported.

For every incident of church arson, there are a hundred thousand who are repulsed.

Our challenge, ladies and gentlemen, and it is a challenge, is to listen for the whispers, to seek the kindness, goodness and gentleness played out every day in a quiet way in South Carolina. This is the real South Carolina...good and decent, loyal and proud.

Greatness flows from goodness, just as oceans flow from rivers.

I ask each of you, black and white, male and female, Democrat and Republican, to catch the vision of who we are and what we can be.

When history writes of our age, let it write that we came together as one people, with one purpose, under one God, and that we built opportunity upon fairness and greatness upon goodness.

May God bless you and South Carolina.

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